



## A REVOLUTION IN THE CHURCH

article By GARRY WILLS *and for your penance, father, do three to five at danbury...*

The United States shouldn't worry about the Soviets in Latin America, because they are not revolutionaries anymore. But they should worry about the Catholic revolutionaries, who are.

—Fidel Castro, 1967

It was a flamboyant Mass, that drear ghetto night, in the brightly lit church. The choir attacked old spirituals with the zest of a Fred Waring group suddenly given soul. But a hush, as is customary, settled on the church as bread and wine were consecrated, to the words of the Last Supper. Father Philip Linden—young, black, tall (six feet, five), his resisting, hair frizzed up into a natural, his vestment a *dashiki*—picked up the Communion bread and intoned, "On the night he was

betrayed, he took bread, broke it and gave it to his friends, saying, "This is my body. . . . This is my blood . . . it shall be shed for many. . . . Do this in memory of me."

*On the night he was betrayed.* The sermon had just called to mind "our brother Martin," for whom this Mass was offered. It was Dr. King's birthday; the mule trains and Coretta were back in town. Father Linden and his choir had come over from Baltimore to celebrate and pray where fires had burned all that long night after King's death, the night he was betrayed. Not betrayed, admittedly, by any one Judas in his circle. Still, all his last years King had been spied on, slandered, his every act pried into, rights of privacy denied him—treated like an outlaw, someone to be trapped. No wonder anger broke

ILLUSTRATION BY WARREN LINN

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out in fire across the nation, anger at all King's opponents, minimizers of his work, enemies of his mission, those who would not hear, who said, "Do not listen," called him liar. They resembled the men who ridiculed Isaiah, those who "say to the seers, 'You shall not see,' and to the visionaries, 'You shall have no true visions; give us smooth words.'" Enemies of the word are betrayers of its bearer—so this was done in memory of him, our brother Martin.

And, the priest added after Communion, in memory of "our sisters and brothers of the Conspiracy." Father Linden, you see, was a member of the East Coast Conspiracy to Save Lives, some of whose members had just been indicted in Harrisburg on charges of planning to bomb and kidnap.

Recent history must seem like a nightmare confirmation of every red-neck's fears. First, a Baptist minister (of all people) started a revolution, one of those safe black oversolemn preacher types out of *The Green Pastures*, with a bible full of submissiveness—yet suddenly, that book caught fire in his hand; the pulpit had become a force again, a source of militant strength for blacks, menace for whites. Churches, long the most innocuous parts of our landscape, were now dangerous—as they had been when Patrick Henry spoke from a pew in Saint John's of Richmond. No wonder Southerners felt betrayed by "their" blacks and "their" religion. This preacher was actually *preaching*, and his words were not smooth.

Then new fears came to the Bible Belt as Catholic priests were charged with political conspiracy—memories of the Al Smith candidacy and "How many troops does the Pope have?" It was the kind of fear that had been laughed at for a long time, pooh-poohed in the Kennedy campaign, considered by the knowing a mere joke in questionable taste. Catholics themselves had spent cautious years dispelling any notion that a priest would meddle in American politics. And they had done their work well. By the early Sixties, there was nothing less dangerous than a Catholic priest.

But no longer. Some priests now carry danger with them—as friends of Philip and Daniel Berrigan have found out. A Pennsylvania grand-jury indictment treats visits with one of these priests in jail as "overt acts" of conspiracy. When two other priests, as a result of that indictment, were arrested in Baltimore, their cardinal, Lawrence Shehan, went instantly to visit them. Will that be considered an overt act of conspiracy? Probably not; though another of the overt acts—a nun's move to Washington—was performed in response to her superior's command. It seems only fair that that superior, responsible for the overt act, should be indicted, too. And even if Baltimore's cardinal escaped the law, he is treated by some as a guilty man. After his visit to the jail, Catholics picketed Masses at his cathedral bearing signs that said, **DOWN WITH RED PRIESTS**—and if Catholics say that, what are the red-necks saying? A man in clerical dress and Roman collar went into a Baltimore hardware store to buy a length of lead pipe—a transaction that caught the eye of a crapulous gentleman just over from the neighboring tavern. He wanted to know what the unpatriotic priest was going to blow up *next*. The answer given was measured: that the

purchaser was neither American nor a Roman Catholic, but an Anglican visitor to this country. His critic, badly deflated, making one last try, asked then just what the pipe *was* for—and the response, this time, was gratifyingly obscene.

Pickers angry or confused over "Red priests" are not the only Catholics opposed to recent trends. Some older-line liberals also feel adrift. They had argued for years that the American scheme of church-state separation, dividing religion from politics, was a valid position. Jesuit John Courtney Murray, once silenced by Rome for maintaining this view, was vindicated at the Second Vatican Council. But by then, priests and nuns were out marching for civil rights, speaking for or against political candidates, running for office themselves, lobbying in Washington (to make laws), breaking into draft offices (to defy laws). There are still some Catholic liberals who think priests and nuns should go back into rectories and convents, let laymen represent their Church "in the world." But that will not happen now. If the Church is to recruit any priests at all, they will increasingly be movement priests, young men sympathetic to radical causes even when they don't actively promote them. The Berrigans are heroes to a whole generation of young men entering the seminaries, staying there or leaving them for a role as Catholic activists.

Not the least bewildered Catholics, we may be sure, are those FBI men who pursue or spy on priests and nuns, tap their wires, attend new liturgies, send informers into parish circles. When Sister Sue Cordes, working for the Berrigan defense committee, went to her sister's wedding a year ago, her mother warned her not to say too much about the peacework—the bridegroom was an agent. Father Redmond McGoldrick, a Jesuit priest who has been arrested four times at political protests, is on polite but guarded terms with his FBI brother-in-law. When agents finally ran down a Protestant minister who had yielded his pulpit to Dan Berrigan, while he was loose and being hunted, they spent 15 minutes talking about the priest's whereabouts and 40 minutes explaining why they, as Catholics, felt justified in stalking priests. The "conspiracy" and the FBI draw heavily on the same Catholic subculture.

For henceforth in one house five will be divided, three against two and two against three.

—Luke 12:52

Why this odd, Kafka pursuit of Catholics by Catholics? It is not mysterious. Catholics had in recent decades been conditioned to a theological animus against communism, and that attitude dovetailed neatly with old immigrant desires to prove their loyalty to America. The structure of the Church, moreover, elicited from Catholics a deep respect for authority and made them familiar with doctrinal ways of testing that respect. Catholics drifted naturally, therefore, toward investigative agencies in the fiercest Cold War time. This was as natural as the drift of other young men to the discipline and authority of the priesthood. The process was a mere updating of the classic choice offered in an Italian (or other ethnic) ghetto: While an older brother—Dominic,



say, played by Victor Mature—joined the police force, his younger brother Salvatore (played by Sal Mineo) went off to study for the priesthood. And Dom and Sal were equally good boys.

By the Fifties, of course, Dom had moved up—from cop on the beat to college graduate, eagerly recruited now by the FBI, by Federal and military investigative agencies. As the overworked joke put it, Fordham graduates were hired to check on Harvard graduates. If I may cast the situation in personal terms, one of my best friends from Catholic high school days is still in the CIA. And both brothers of the girl I dated back then were in a seminary—until one of the brothers left to join the FBI. This was a common progression. A Scripture scholar at the seminary where three of the Harrisburg defendants were trained says hardly a year went by, in the late Fifties and early Sixties, without his receiving an FBI clearance sheet on one of his former students, now applying to the Bureau. Hoover's force was attractive to the ex-seminarian at several levels of conscious and unconscious motivation. It gave young men a corps to join, a fellowship with an outsider's role as scrutinizer of men's failings and guardian of order. Boys who might have been uneasy at too-abrupt re-entry into secular life could stand partly off from it, still in distrust, spying on it—God's spies upon the world.

And if, by the Fifties, Dom had moved up from cop on the beat to regional director of the FBI, Sal, too, had gone to college, risen socially, taken on new responsibilities. A good example is the worker priest John Cronin, who found Communists easing into union jobs during World War Two and worked with the FBI to expose them. He was thus in an excellent position, after the war, to draw on the FBI's secret files, which he used to draft the American bishops' hard statement on the Communist menace. His contacts—with labor, Congress, Church hierarchy and the FBI—put him at the very center of postwar anti-Communist patriotism, a situation symbolized by the fact that he (along with Bishop Fulton Sheen) served as philosophical mentor to freshman Congressman Richard Nixon in 1947. Father Cronin even acted as Nixon's intermediary for reports smuggled out of the FBI (through Catholic agent Ed Hummer) when the Truman Administration was trying to halt inquiry into the case of Alger Hiss. Later, when Nixon became Vice-President, Father Cronin became his very ghostly ghostwriter.

Dom and Sal, once marginal Americans, were now a (largely secret) team at the top of things, quiet, well-intentioned saviors of their country. No won-

der a myth began to shape itself in terms of Communist menace and Catholic solution—Monsignor Sheen guiding Louis Budenz out of his Marxist darkness into light, Whittaker Chambers joining Clare Boothe Luce and William Buckley on crusade, an Irish Catholic Midwestern Senator taking on smug Ivy League Dean Achesons and Averell Harrimans. Rome, once suspect, now seemed the firmest bastion of Washington. No wonder Catholic patriots rejoiced—theirs were the country's shrivers, godly protectors and policemen.

Imagine, then, the harsh cheating of expectation when Catholic loyalists were sent out to trap their grade school teachers, "the good nuns." The awkwardness of it showed up when churches had to be searched; raids were actually made on sacristies, with their surplice closets from which agents had robbed themselves when they were altar boys. The FBI men probed in a gingerly way and asked, "Are you there, Father Dan?"—always the polite "Father" appended, giving the whole thing an air of the child's game: "Come out, come out, wherever you are." Could it really be a father who was hiding from the law? Or, alternatively, if he was doing all this, could he still be called a father?

Little in the agents' personal experience equipped them to answer such hard questions. They had been brought up to consider all authority as one, in church and state, and to think of priests as especially allied with American values against all "outside" forces (for outside, read Communist). How, then, cope with a force not only inside the country and its citizenry but deep inside the Catholic structure of holy things? It would be easy enough to handle a merely selfish or crooked Catholic gone astray. If Dom and Sal had become, respectively, cop and priest, another route of escape from the ghetto had been taken by the third brother, Rocco (played by Richard Conte, now that Edward G. Robinson was too old for the part). Rocco was always the slick one, who finally outsmarted himself, went too far too fast; yet he would stagger back at the end, to die in the flicker of candles down the side aisle of his neighborhood church. Dom had hunted him down, but Sal would find and absolve him—"Are you there, Rocco?"

These new outlaws, however, are of a different order altogether. Rocco, when caught, obligingly repented. The real problem with men like the Berrigans is not that they are priests but that they refuse to recognize their crimes as crime, to give in to the good guys in the only way that matters—giving in to their standards and values. No, these men cling to their defiance, make of it what Catholics used to call "an outward sign of an inward reality"—a *sacramental*

criminality. As Bureau agents poked further into this enigma—"Are you there, Father Dan?"—did they remember dark confessionals from their youth (Is Father there, can he hear?), remember peering through the screen until a panel shuffled back and one hastily mumbled, "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned"?

Catholic boys were brought up, once, on stories of heroic priests who kept the seal of confession—the pledge not to reveal things said to them by penitents—when Government investigators tried to learn what was said inside that box. *Government* investigators. It is striking how many Catholic saints defied Caesar—the eternal Caesar of state power—and how little impact that fact has had on Catholics in America. It took the most conservative and fundamentalist kind of church in America—the Southern Baptist—to remind Catholics that all Christians have a heritage of resistance, from catacomb days. But by 1965, some had been reminded. That year, a young man named David Miller became the first American prosecuted for burning his draft card. He was a disciple of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement. When the judge sentenced him, he turned toward prison with a touch of the ancient defiance and told his judge, "Caesar will never have me." That should have been the warning sign that fools were on the loose again. It was almost as bad as living in the early days of Christianity, when Saint Paul's moves through Asia Minor were charted fearfully. At his arrival, men complained to local authorities, "The world's troublemakers are now here" (*Acts of the Apostles* 17:6).

I come out of a tradition stern in point of law and insistent in force of obedience. There are those who may have heard of us—the Society of Jesus. We have a name here and there.  
—Daniel Berrigan, S.J.

Few brothers could be more different than the Berrigans—Philip tall and fair, the athlete; Daniel slight and dark, with the face of a smug leprechaun. Phil, unafraid, always needs action; he practically dragged Dan into the Catonsville action (or drank him into it, through a long night of passionate fraternal arguing). Moody, emotional Irish, a bit of a brawler like his father and pestered by the ardent girls drawn to him, Phil is a hard man to say no to, a good man to have with you in a war. Dan, by contrast, is a bit chilly—aloof. Where Phil inspires, Dan disturbs, in his quieter way, probes deeper; the lines in his young-old face are the map of some strange country not yet explored. A shrewd woman, the first time she met him, said he should wear warning bells on the curved-back toes of green boots.

The world's troublemakers—not a



bad description of these brothers. First came Phil, daring authorities over and over again to jail him—until, at last, they did. He was the first priest to go to jail in America as a political prisoner. Yet Phil inside wasn't nearly the embarrassment that Dan was to prove outside. For four maddening months, the FBI pursued him while he preached, wrote, broadcast, was photographed, was interviewed, moved with pedagogic elusiveness, made his very absence felt as an omnipresence. During this whole time, did any agent recollect tales of priests being hunted—of Topcliffe promising Queen Elizabeth I to find all the Jesuits in her realm; of the principled ascetic who, having let Graham Greene's "whiskey priest" slip through his hands, had to vindicate the purity of his new regime by finding and exterminating this remnant of the shabby past; or of the SS troops—some probably Catholic—who arrested Father Alfred Delp for resistance to Hitler; or of the men who ran Padre Miguel Pro to earth in Mexico?

It's an interesting coincidence that, just one month before the FBI's director claimed that Catholics had plotted to kidnap a Government official, 14,000 British Catholics gathered in Rome to celebrate the canonization of 40 Welsh and English martyrs from the 16th and 17th centuries. These had all, in different ways, defied the English government; indeed, their canonization had been held up for years because of ticklish involvement in anti-Tudor and Hispanophile politics. These martyrs lived, perforce, underground, among enemies of government—Catholics of the more defiant sort, rebellious nobles, the criminals always used by or against such undergrounds, desperate men, many of them with blighted hopes or bitter pasts.

Two such men, both priests, were caught planning to kidnap King James in 1603; they were so wild-eyed that their own coreligionists tipped off the authorities. And once this "bye plot" (by-plot) was discovered, investigation linked it with an even skimpier "main plot," interesting to authorities because Walter Raleigh seemed to be involved in it. Raleigh, greatly feared by the government, was indicted with a pack of Catholic sympathizers (only one odd man in the lot, dour Puritan Lord Grey). The overt act cited against Raleigh was a conversation in which he was told that the king of Spain would pay well for his services. Raleigh answered that such a crime of conspiracy, a mere discussion of possibilities, would put all subjects at the mercy of any man who said objectionable things in their presence. The priests were executed, but Raleigh lived—in the Tower, his death postponed (though he was effectively put out of action).

It was a Jesuit, Henry Garnett, who

informed on the would-be kidnapers of King James; but he got little credit for the act. It was ascribed to Jesuit hatred for all priests not of their order, Elizabeth's and James's ministers were brilliant at setting one part of the Catholic world against another, a policy the king himself called "using tame ducks to catch wild ones." When Father Garnett was himself captured, and denied any knowledge of Guy Fawkes's Gunpowder Plot—he knew of it, but only under the seal of confession—his prison guard was suborned to feign conversion by Garnett, arrange a meeting with another priest and then listen in while Garnett made his confession. It was a world where no one was completely safe, nor proof against government bribes and pressures, spies and *provocateurs*.

Yet some men moved through that compromised time of plot and counterplot with almost ablutionary innocence. The 40 canonized in Rome represent a mere tenth of the Catholics, mainly priests, who were killed on England's gallows. Equivocal men and those who dabbled in politics were excluded from consideration—not only the two priest-kidnapers but men like Garnett, tangentially involved with Guy Fawkes. Those left for canonization, after this winnowing, were men like Robert Southwell, the Jesuit poet, a kind of minor Blake nodding in on England a century early:

*The same you saw in heavenly seate,  
Is he that now sucks Maries teate.*

Southwell returned to England, after ordination as a priest in Rome, bringing the Catholic sacraments to his fellow believers. The very simplicity of his aim seemed to give his work a charmed protection. Clothed like a swashbuckler, he lived next door to one of Elizabeth's own London houses, just across from the Earl of Leicester, at a time when other priests avoided London as too dangerous (they were scattered about the country, in Catholic mansions equipped with priest holes to hide them). Southwell was pure Elizabethan in all but his religion: he boasted of his love for the Virgin Queen, a lady who (like him) "hath for her self made Choise of a single life." In time, Southwell made his way to her Majesty's gallows—betrayed, like most of his fellow victims, by a need to keep in touch with the Catholic underground in all its aspects, both careful and careless. Loneliness and despair were the enemies, and community the main psychic need of these men, no matter how risky its purchase. Southwell bribed his way into prisons to assure condemned priests that they were not alone in their ordeal.

But Southwell had no illusions about certain of the Catholics he met. In an appeal he wrote to the queen, he did not try to excuse all men of his faith, only asked her to remember, "It were a

hard Course to reprove all Prophetts for one Saul." He also knew that the strongest men have their weaknesses. As he wrote of Saint Peter:

*Muse not to see some mud in clearest brooke,  
They once were brittle mould, that now are Saintes.*

When Catholic hotheads let themselves be drawn into the so-called Babington's plot by government *provocateurs*, Southwell compared them to "simple Isaac," who carried the fire and fuel to his own execution. But he also mocked the government for its exaggerated reaction, its attempt to whip up fear over this plot—"hues and Cries raised, frights bruted in the peoples eares, and all mens eyes filled with such a smoake, as though the whole Realme had bene on fier, wheras in truth it was but the hissing of a few greene twiggies of their owne kindling, which they might without any such uprores have quenched with a handfull of water, but that it made not so much for their purpose as these huggish and terrible shewes . . . [and] generall demonstrations of a needles feare."

*Down the bleak corridor  
Philip's typewriter, like the stick of  
a blind prophet  
Argues the deities blind.  
Tom Lewis ponders tomorrow,  
From swine tending at Lewisburg  
prison  
To Baltimore court one scene and  
the same;  
The parable of Jesus  
Keeps sane his gentle spirit.  
Wherefore, John Urey, make common  
cause with us  
Indicted felons. . .*

—Daniel Berrigan, *Trial Poems*

Dan Berrigan is very conscious of his Jesuit forebears. He has written poems and essays on Jesuits in the French Resistance and worker-priest movement; on Père Sébastien Rasle, S.J., who ministered to American Indians; on John Urey (see the poem above), a priest who helped Bahamian slaves escape through the American colonies, who was executed under British law—like the Elizabethan Jesuits—by being "hanged, drawn and quartered." He comforts himself with the thought that Phil in the Lewisburg hole has at last brought the priest hole to America. He re-read Southwell in the underground and recalled the martyrdom of French Jesuits by North American Indians. One way Dan Berrigan contrasts himself with Phil, a Josephite priest, is in terms of their two orders: "Philip doesn't have as strong or passionate a sense of belonging to his order as I do. . . . His congregation's traditions are by no means as old or as exciting or as imaginative; his



order hasn't undergone the test of so many centuries." When psychiatrist Robert Coles interviewed Dan underground, he was told what the Jesuit order means in his life:

The Jesuits of the 16th or 17th Century lived underground in England to vindicate the unity of the Church. They were willing to do so rather than sit back and take no action to signify their sense of horror at the breakaway of England, an event which was to them a life-and-death question. And Jesuits have died to vindicate the truth of the Eucharist in other European countries. These were, of course, religious questions posed in a religious context.

Protestants can speak in the same way about their martyrs. The difference now is, as a man like Bonhoeffer illustrated for us, that the questions are being posed across the board in a way that says: Shall man survive?

In his belief that the spirit has different missions in different ages, Dan Berrigan refers to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the evangelical pastor who moved from absolute pacifism to violent resistance against Hitler. Eberhard Bethge has described Bonhoeffer's own sense that Christians have a constantly varying witness to bear against the world:

Like Kierkegaard, Bonhoeffer had always believed that "Luther would say now the opposite of what he said then," whereby he would really be saying the same thing, the vital thing. Once, faith had meant leaving the cloister; faith might come to mean a reopening of the cloister; and faith might also mean taking part in politics.

Dan spelled out the continuity indifference this way:

I can't conceive of myself as a Jesuit priest dying on behalf of the Eucharist, dying to vindicate the truth of the Eucharist, except in a very new way—except as the Eucharist would imply the fact that man is of value. . . . Today, in other words, the important questions have an extraordinarily secularized kind of context. So I find myself at the side of the prophets or the martyrs, in however absurd and inferior a way, and I find no break with their tradition in what I am trying to stand for. . . . I cannot pose in such a time as ours these questions as sacred questions involving what I conceive to be a kind of Platonic dogma—even though I hope I believe as firmly in the reality of the Eucharist as 17th Century Jesuits did; and that belief is still very

much at the center of my understanding of my life. For me to be underground because of my position and deeds with respect to the Vietnam war—well, I find in that predicament a continuity of spirit with what other Jesuits stood for.

The sense of a large moral heritage, of belonging in the great line of Christian witnesses against the world, gives to the Berrigans and their followers an insouciance that often looks like arrogance. They don't care about the things that interest so many others, the here-and-now little issues, even of their own Church. They call debate about things like papal infallibility or birth control or priestly celibacy Mickey Mouse issues that have nothing to do with Christianity. One of the nuns working on the Harrisburg defense committee explained the solidarity on largely personal issues felt throughout the Catholic underground. "I always wanted to work against the war, but I was afraid. I worried that I wouldn't be able to stand it if I went to jail. Phil gave us a sense that we could support each other, we would never be alone, we would stand together." At the Lewisburg prison, Phil Berrigan ended up in the hole for leaving his assigned prison sector; one of the Catonsville prisons was being threatened with homosexual rape and Phil took him away from danger.

This determination to keep in touch, to provide one another mutual comfort, involves some risk—sympathetic hearing even to desperate people, assurance to those jailed that resistance will continue, dangerous communication with fugitives and those in prison. It is said that Jimmy Hoffa's extensive mail service in and out of Lewisburg prison was offered to Phil, but he preferred to trust committed movement types—and was betrayed by a bogus movement type.

Still, despite the dangers, those whose priorities are so radically different seem to move through our diminished times with strange jauntiness, a refusal to be cowed by the institutions of menace and punishment. Dan during his four months of risky preaching and clever escape displayed some of Southwell's own panache. He stayed invisible by sheer audacity—as when he spoke to an audience full of FBI agents at Cornell, then escaped in the 12-foot-tall papier-mâché costume of an apostle, left over from a mime group's act. The agents had been waiting for the talk to end so that they could arrest him unobtrusively but he slipped away in a symbol far too obvious for them to see, twirling blind yet untouched through danger, safe in the guiding hands of his friends. The lawmen had come to arrest a small priest and they let a large apostle go. The incident sums up all J. Edgar's

bungling attempts to bring down this new kind of hero; each act just increases their stature.

When the Berrigans and seven others were convicted of destroying Catonsville draft files, Dan said, "We agree that this is the greatest day of our lives," and politely asked the judge if they could offer a prayer. The poor robed man, aware of judiciary action to keep prayer out of classrooms, did not know what to do with his own courtroom. There is nothing these people do that is not dangerous in some way, these world-troublemakers. At last the judge submitted to his ordeal by liturgy, as the convicts linked hands and recited their Pater Noster. Some of the Elizabethan martyrs, when sentenced to death, had sung in the courtroom a *Te Deum*, the traditional hymn for celebrating victories. Mutual comfort at the scaffold became a task that Catholics imposed upon themselves, treating the gallows as an altar, gathering there for prayer. One man, brought out late, saw a number of his fellow priests lined up for execution, shouted, "Here's a jolly company," and ran up the stairs. Another, when the sun came out—and caused a shiver in the superstitious crowd—laughed off the supposedly favorable sign by saying, "Soon I shall be above yon fellow." When Edmund Campion was told to stop praying in Latin, just before his death, he said, "I pray God in a language we both well understand." What can you do with people who will not be had by Caesar? Even while he ran, Dan Berrigan reminded his pursuers: "We have chosen our fate; we have not been condemned to it."

When Father Dan was captured at last, he was whisked past newsmen, his handcuffs lifted in a crippled wave of the V sign—a baffled hawk, his wings pinned back, but the eyes still bright and mocking. Reporters asked what he would do now and he grinned back, "Resist." When priests and laymen made a "pentecostal fire" of Chicago draft files, police found that a 20-year-old among them had just recently left jail, after serving time for a similar offense. When Dorothy Day, that veteran resister, leader of the Catholic Worker movement, was asked what Catholics could do about the war, she said, "Pack the jails with our men. Pack the jails."

Dan Berrigan has in large part inherited the constituency of Dorothy Day, who kept alive the ardent Catholicism of the outcast through our country's militaristic Forties and apathetic Fifties. She looked, for a while, old-fashioned in the cool liberal Sixties of Jack Kennedy, when a new image was given the official Church by Pope John and the Second Vatican Council. That was a time of swinging nuns—Sister Corita Kent celebrating consumer America to show she was "with it," Sister Jacqueline Gren-



nan, the "Jackie" of religion's Camelot. Americanism, once considered a heresy in Rome, became an orthodoxy as silenced theologians won all their old battles (a decade too late to matter) at the Council. Dorothy Day was invited over to Rome and she went with her customary way of obliging Church superiors. But there was always something unbought under her deference. How could she be bought off? She deals in a coinage no Pope can mint at his palace: in young lives—poor lives, desperate lives. She was jailed, in the apathetic time, for sitting on a park bench when sirens wailed the least complacent people in the world—sour, jaded New Yorkers—into bomb shelters. When all the rest were fooled, she wasn't. She wrote what turned out to be the first pages of a growing prison literature on the Catholic left and gave us one of the first glimpses into the crazed Lesbian cages we call women's houses of detention.

It was Dorothy's young people—men like David Miller and Jim Forest—who were restive, even under Kennedy; who moved from civil rights toward peace activism; who knew the war at once for what it was and said, "No incense to Mars, not even a pinch." They burned draft cards: one, in crazy ardor, even burned himself, and Dan Berrigan, preaching at his funeral, realized he must take these young people into dangers less ultimate and futile; into dangers, nonetheless; they had shown their mettle for that. New Catholic radicalisms were coming to birth elsewhere; *Ramparts* began as a slick kind of *Commonweal* West, then alternated futility with opportunism. Products of Catholic schools were now writing the Port Huron Statement and running the Free Speech Movement.

The change in tone between Dorothy Day's time and Dan Berrigan's can be seen in the reaction of officials. They moved from chagrined permissiveness to hysterical repression. Though Dorothy was arrested for defying the air-raid drills of the Fifties, she had often been on picket lines where New York's finest managed to ignore her and her people, though arresting others. Even more important, Dorothy was never in trouble with Church authorities. Cardinal Spellman let her carry on her work in his diocese—without encouragement or endorsement, true, but also without major hindrance. Partly, I suppose, he didn't think a mere woman could be all that dangerous; and Dorothy, for her part, was reassuringly "churchy"—orthodox on purely doctrinal matters, content with the Latin Rite and silences of liturgical *Romanita*. But Dan was a priest and he experimented with new Mass forms and would have no trouble getting into jail; he must be taken care of. Spellman pressured Berrigan's Jesuit su-

periors to ship him off to Latin America. But then something new happened, something Spellman hadn't counted on, had spent a whole career not counting on, though only now did he realize it: Catholics throughout the country rallied behind Dan (who had gone off obediently to Cuernavaca). The resulting furor backed Spellman up against his cathedral wall. Berrigan was brought back in honor and a new age of resistance was born, to state authority and Church officials.

This was something that could not be coped with in the old way—Spellman's way, or Cardinal McIntyre's way (in Los Angeles), or J. Edgar Hoover's way. Now, instead of Dom and Sal working together, cop-priest with priest-cop, Tom (named for Saint Thomas Aquinas) Foran was prosecuting Tom (named for Saint Thomas More) Hayden. Rocco had become Mario Savio. Catholic judges were listening to Thomistic arguments on higher law and conscience and the limits put on Caesar, then reluctantly sentencing the priests who used all that seminary learning in court to a harsher penal monasticism. Tame ducks were brought in to catch wild ducks; already, *four* Irish Catholic prosecutors were lined up for the Harrisburg trial. Monasteries and convents were hiding draft resisters, nuns raided draft boards and an underground railway had grown up to support fugitives. This underground, despite wild things done by and in it, had been surprisingly successful. Dan, of course, got caught; but only in time, and while courting maximum publicity, and after being given high FBI priority. But people forget that at least 11 convicted Catholics are still loose in the underground, including one of the Catonsville Nine, Mary Moylan.

[The prophet Jeremiah was] a man profoundly in touch with his tradition, a man profoundly at odds with his tradition. —Daniel Berrigan

Those Catholics who go underground would not be so offensive to "normal" Catholics if it meant going *out*—leaving the Church, the priesthood, the Christian fellowship, once and for all. Timorous episcopal "fishers of men" would gladly shake these fish out of their nets; but the unwanted catch just laugh and hang in there. Phil writes to Dan, "We'll muck through for old Mother Church." Dan says that the institutional Church nibbled away at Christ—yet Christ was there to be nibbled at. Phil answers, "Yes, she is a whore, but she's our mother." Part a whore and part a queen, and these sons admire her even when she embarrasses them (in a time of world danger, the Vatican newspaper gets most worked up about the subject of miniskirts). Mother may be a wacky dame

at best, but these disturbing sons—Phil raucous, Dan ironic—pay her the compliment of finding her "serious" (Phil's word—the statement released when his Baltimore Four burned draft files was signed, "Seriously yours") and "interesting" (Dan's cooler word of accolade).

No wonder the agents of law—all those submissive agents of Americanism who wear collars and miters as well as badges—fear such men and women, yet fear to move against them. They *must* be enemies—good Lord, they think the Church is *disreputable*! These agents have never thought her that, nor found her dangerous. The Church's enemies, they feel, are men who call her Mother while remaining unrepentant, those clerical black sheep. And if such criminals persevere, then these agents will follow their consciences (however unhappily), will hunt priests down, arrest and imprison them, remain good Catholics even when the good nuns accuse them of being good Germans. The Berrigans, it seems clear to these men, have hurt the Church even more than they have hurt their country: Bless me, Father, but *you* have sinned—and the night you eluded us, our gentlemanly agreement and forbearance at Cornell, was the night *we* were betrayed. And so the "bird watcher" on Block Island who captured Dan prayed audibly over his deed, *ad maiorem Dei gloriam* (to God's great glory). It is the motto of Dan Berrigan's religious order; his captor was saying that *he* was the true Jesuit, distinguisher of duties, maintaining his allegiance to the great J. Edgar in the sky.

One can understand the agent's prayer, his claim to be acting for his Church as well as the state. The Berrigans have turned against their fellow Catholics in certain ways, destroyed that good, safe name built up by years of protesting that, as John Kennedy put it, the Church has nothing to tell politicians. They have brought down the precarious public dignity of the priesthood, exposed even the most sacred things to ridicule and profanation—so that a White House dignitary can make jokes about sex-starved nuns, something even Paul Blanshard would not have dared back in the Fifties. But, in fact, it was not Kissinger who cheapened the nuns' life so much as braless "sisters" in bell-bottoms showing up at protests where four-letter words fill the air and naked kids splash in nearby fountains. Were all Sister Ingrid Bergman's movie vows taken in vain?

It was the delicate balance Catholics had achieved in this country, which the Berrigans are now destroying; on the one hand, Catholics grew up "safe," trusted as fully American; yet they had their own little enclave of comforting



familiar things, some borrowed, some adapted, some preserved—all forming a distinctive texture, a weave of memories. The child was nurtured in the closed jewel box of a Catholic education—open the lid, little girls in white turned around and around to the Latin music-box tune. Catholics “belonged” in America, yet had special ways of belonging to one another, traditional means of recognizing one another anywhere (the telltale vocabulary, fish on Friday, girls’ hats on Sunday). The recurrent things were instantly recognizable—the painless unsunned faces of the nuns, each looking like the one who used to teach you; the undertipping otherworldly priest in ill-fitting clothes; the porcine *monsignori* puffing on cigars. The cigar-box style of art—garish mantillaed Madonnas, baby saints, Jesus as a Latin lover without the hair oil. All these things held “the people of God” together without pitting them against the people of America—of whom, indeed, the people of God were a part, and the most accommodating part.

All these symbols had a binding effect on those inside the Church and impressed those outside with the institution’s weight and presence, made the Church a pillar of society, a source of stability in “the Free World” (as John Kennedy liked to call it). That was the Catholic contribution to America, one long labored at, finally achieved, then celebrated; and, at the moment of victory, betrayed. Betrayed from within by those who should have proved most loyal. By priests who changed the parish liturgy and then deserted the parish, leaving those who liked the *old* uncomfortable with the *new*, unable to go back or rest in what they had or find a new goal they could move toward. Betrayed by nuns who no longer taught the girls in white dresses a catechism music they could dance to, in time with the machinery of truth. No wonder the young were ready to follow false prophets.

And not only the young. Even Dom, the good cop, is confused. When a defense lawyer asked an FBI man outside the courtroom in Harrisburg if he thought priests would advocate or indulge in violent politics, the agent said, “Why not? Look at the Crusades.” In that sentence, abysses open to swallow poor Dom. The Crusades—a holy war, waged by kings and led by priests, church and state one authority, all its parts self-confirming, none self-doubting. But the Harrisburg defendants are *opposed* to war, the warrior-kings and chaplain-priests. Where does that put the agent, along with his God and J. Edgar? They are the crusaders, men of political force and holy war. By staying

out of politics, the Church has tacitly endorsed and been endorsed by our warfare state, and now finds itself at bay, along with the warmakers.

One part of Catholicism is a captive of the state and the other part is trying to free it. This latter part of the Church not only looks free itself but has a greater sense of identity, of continuity with the past. By contrast, the official Church looks lost, out of contact with its own principles; the timorous parish prays in a mishmash of styles, all forced and unfelt, while Dan Berrigan speaks confidently out of what he calls “the ennobling common patrimony.” It has been the Catholic lot, in America, to live “in a kind of moral slum, across the tracks from our past. . . . [Their] minds wear the costumes of their ancestors, a clothing that was once befitting, literally, but is now simply a folklore.”

Berrigan is interested in the substance of that past, what it means to carry forward its spirit, not its clothes and trappings, priestly rags, dimmed jewels. Christianity’s *basic* documents and ideals are what he preaches from. Asked what he did while on the run, he answered an interviewer: “Every day, at some point, I read some New Testament and meditated upon it; it’s a strict Jesuit tradition to us. Scripture as a point of departure for prayer, and I love the whole penumbra of those words in history.” More and more he sees his task in terms of the difficulty of being a man of tradition. “A man can claim to be going somewhere only if he has come from somewhere,” for “we are what we have been”—those who reject their past lose the main thing given to them by that past, themselves. Yet, correlatively, “a man can claim to have come from somewhere only if he is going somewhere”—we are what we must become.

Less and less does the merely recent, the fashionably liberal, sound in Dan Berrigan’s prose. Once, for instance, he praised the cosmic optimism of Teilhard de Chardin. Yet as he moves toward a Gospel conservatism, he has come to recognize the demonic in our cult of progress, our “obscene olympianism based on technology.” He contrasts the reaction of Sartre to the Hiroshima bomb, the rending awareness of tragedy, with Teilhard’s rosy encomium to that mushroom, a bomb cloud whose drift proves that all things that rise do *not*, necessarily, converge. Dan’s eyes look down, to the evil fruit dropped from that mushroom—charred bodies and a scarred earth, and the city of man undone in an instant. Teilhard, who called the Geophysical Year “Year One of the Noosphere,” had to domesticate in that pulsing mental sphere even these mushrooms of the mind. What would he have

said about our moon landing? Presumably, what Nixon said: “The greatest week . . . since creation.”

Dan found in the moonshot a symbol of our culture’s “moral weightlessness,” and he sought chains. The prisoner and the astronaut, seared bodies and the cloud, the children and the mushroom—those are the choices we move among, and Dan Berrigan has made his choice. He stands for roots instead of rockets, tradition over progress, tragedy over arrogance, weakness over power, Gospel over Caesar. Nor is this unique with him. Much serious religion tends, today, to be politically radical and theologically conservative. This is not true only of Catholics like Dorothy Day and the Berrigans and Cesar Chavez but of Protestants like Martin Luther King and A. J. Muste, William Stringfellow and William Coffin, and of Jews like Arthur Waskow and Len Rodberg. Despite all the verbal play, often tendentious, over the fact that radical can mean rooted, it does seem now that what goes *downward* is what converges. Men meet each other returning to their sources. That is why, apparently, each of the faiths has turned new attention back on its own and one another’s prophets—and, behind them, to those great figures of the past from whom the very term prophet derives. If Saint Paul was called a troublemaker, Ahab had earlier called Elijah “the troubler of Israel” (*1 Kings* 18:17). Prophets were men rebuking kings, calling power back to God. No wonder the bearers of such warning were not welcomed—not Elijah in Samaria, not Amos in Bethel; neither Isaiah in Jerusalem nor Jonah in Nineveh. All the seers have been told that they must not see; all visionaries have been ordered to give up their visions.

This is not because they are innovators. Professor Delbert Hillers has demonstrated that prophets called kings back to an older tradition of the Lord’s covenant; and R. B. Y. Scott writes that “They were social revolutionaries because they were religious conservatives.” Prophecy looks simultaneously backward and forward, assigns men fresh tasks with an urgency born of ancient obligation. In this way, prophets summon men *into* history, down to where the deep streams run, fed by the oldest springs. Even Jesus, who looked forward when he said, “Do this in memory of me,” also looked backward to the prophets (to *Isaiah* 53:12, to blood shed for many) on the night he was betrayed.

